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Unilever

UNILEVER TO TEST FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK FROM THIS MONTH

The British consumer goods giant said on Tuesday it would offer shorter work week for all its 81 staff in New Zealand

TRIAL STARTS SOON, WILL RUN FOR A YEAR

During the test, which will roll out this month and run for a year, the employees can decide which four days they want to work each week. There will be no pay cut, even though the total working hours have been reduced. The trial is expected to help employees attain a healthy work-life balance, and enhance productivity, bringing more profits to the company

OUTPUT COUNTS, NOT TIME SPENT AT WORK

- In 2019, Microsoft had tried a four-day work week in Japan. It found employees were happier and productivity jumped by 40%
- Nick Bangs, MD of Unilever New Zealand, said the goal of the test is to "measure performance on output, not time"
- Unilever said it plans to shake up its workflow on a wider scale

1,55,000
EMPLOYEES ON THE ROLLS OF UNILEVER IN OVER 100 COUNTRIES

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI









daCunha/AB/717

Representatives of farmer unions (from L) address the media after talks with the Centre, in New Delhi on Tuesday; farmers relax at the Delhi-UP border after lunch at Ghazipur; and one of the wrinkled faces of the protest | PTI

Govt sows panel plan, farmers uproot it

Agitators reject proposal to form small delegation for talks instead of holding it with all 32 leaders; both sides refuse to budge on three new farm sector laws; next round on Thursday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi/Chandigarh

THE much-anticipated talks between agitating farmers and the Centre on Tuesday over the controversial three new farm sector reform laws, ended in a stalemate with the former rejecting a proposal to set up a committee to examine the issues flagged by them. Both sides, however, agreed to meet again on Thursday.

"Now is not the time for setting up committees," representatives of farmer unions were quoted as saying. They were firm on their demand to repeal the new laws and said their protests will continue.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar later said: "We asked the union leaders to form a smaller group and discuss the laws clause by clause. The government has no objection to any discussion. The fourth round of talks will take place on December 3."

Representatives of all 32 agitating farmer unions participated. Apart from Tomar, the government was represented by Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Industries Som Prakash.

According to sources, the government offered to constitute a multi-disciplinary panel comprising representatives of farmer unions, agricultural experts and other government bodies to look into their demands, but the union leaders rejected it.

"The Centre had no answers. They asked us to propose five names of farmer leaders for a committee that would hold talks with the government and also participate in another panel to discuss the laws. We rejected it outright," Bharatiya Kisan Union (Rajewal) president Balbir Singh Rajewal said.

"Minister Narendra Singh Tomar appeared helpless; we could read his body language," said Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ugranhan) president Joginder Singh Ugranhan.

Later, another round of talks was held with BKU chief Rakesh Tikait and other union leaders at the agriculture ministry. "We have told them to submit their concerns in writing," Tomar said.

Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah met Tomar at BJP president J P Nadda's residence for the third time in as many days. P8

> *We suggested to them to form a small committee, but they said they all will be present in the meeting. We agreed to that* - Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Agriculture Minister

GOVT INSTRUCTS POLICE TO SHOW UTMOST RESTRAINT

Wary of drawing negative international attention, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs on Tuesday instructed the Delhi Police to handle the agitation with utmost restraint, amid inputs that more *kisan* unions are likely to join the protesters. The Centre was, however, quick to snub Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for his comments on the protests, saying they were ill-informed and unwarranted

SARKARI CHAI? NO THANKS

"During tea break, the government offered tea and snacks but we turned it down and instead invited them to our agitation spot to have food from our *langar* (community kitchen). We will also offer milk and jalebis," informed farmer leaders who attended the meeting

Never said everyone will be administered the Covid shot: Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Centre on Tuesday said it never spoke about vaccinating the entire country against Covid-19, adding there may not even be the need to vaccinate everyone. On the allegation of the 'adverse event' reported in the human trial of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, being produced by the Serum Institute of India, the government said it will not affect vaccine timelines.

At the health ministry briefing, ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said the purpose of the Covid vaccine drive would be to break the chain of viral transmission. "If we are able to vaccinate a critical mass of people and break the chain of transmission, then we may not have to vaccinate the entire population," Bhargava explained.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said there was never talk about inoculating the whole population with Covid-19 vaccine. "I just want to make this clear that the government has never spoken about vaccinating the entire country. It's important that we discuss such scientific issues, based on factual information only and then analyse it," Bhushan said.

The ICMR chief reiterated the importance of masks in fighting the pandemic. He said, "The role of masks is also important and that will continue even after vaccination. Because we are starting with a small group of population at a time, masks will continue to be used to help in breaking the chain of viral transmission."

CONTINUED ON: P9



Ex-minister kidnapped, forced to pay ₹48L ransom

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

FORMER minister Varthur Prakash and his driver were allegedly kidnapped on November 25, brutally assaulted and held to ransom by a gang of eight kidnappers who had demanded ₹30 crore for their release.

Preliminary investigations revealed that Prakash had a dispute over a piece of land and had received threat calls, a senior police officer said. However, unverified accounts also point to the abduction being linked to the ex-minister's involvement in cattle trade as he owes huge amounts to farmers and traders in Tamil Nadu from whom he had purchased cattle.

Prakash, in his complaint filed on Tuesday, alleged that on November 25, he and his driver Suneel were at a farmhouse located in Begli Hosahalli in Kolar and had left in his SUV to reach Kolar. Around 7pm, a gang of eight came in two cars and blocked his SUV.

The gang allegedly threatened the duo with lethal weapons and forced Prakash into one of their vehicles. The men tied their hands and legs and demanded ₹30 crore. Prakash and his driver were assaulted inside the car when the former refused to give them money even as they were driven around Chintamani, Hoskote and around Bengaluru. P7

HEALTHY GST REVENUE, PMI DATA SHOW RECOVERY IS ON

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

TWO sets of data released on Tuesday indicated India's economy may be on the mend. For one, Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue figures for November showed indirect tax collections crossed the psychological mark of ₹1 lakh crore for the second month in a row, at ₹1.04 lakh crore.

While this was slightly lower than the October mop-up of ₹1.05 lakh crore, it was 1.4% more than the GST revenue recorded in November 2019, as festive demand drove up sales and tax collections.

Festive sales also saw the Nikkei Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) at 56.3 in November, a sign that companies were hoping for continued sales in December and were buying inputs in anticipation.

Though the PMI, compiled by IHS Markit, declined to 56.3 in November from October's decadal high of 58.9, it still remained well above the 50-level, separating growth from contraction.

Officials said that of the total GST collection, central GST was ₹19,189 crore, state GST ₹25,540 crore, IGST ₹51,992 crore (including ₹22,078 crore collected on import of goods) and while cess stood at ₹8,242 crore (including ₹809 crore collected on import of goods).

The government has settled ₹22,293 crore to CGST and ₹16,286 crore to SGST from IGST as regular settlement.

CONTINUED ON: P8

Strong pick-up in export orders

The Nikkei PMI report showed that new export orders increased markedly in November, with survey participants reporting strong demand from key export markets

Railways to hire 1.4L, tests start on Dec 15

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE largest recruitment drive in the country, to fill up 1,40,640 vacancies in the Indian Railways, is set to begin on December 15, with computer-based tests for various categories. Tests conducted for this purpose had to be deferred earlier this year due to the pandemic and resultant lockdown.

In a release on Tuesday, South Western Railway said that candidates would be selected only on the basis of merit, and warned aspirants from falling prey to false promises by unscrupulous individuals. P7

PUSHBACK
AGAINST NEERA TANDEN

The Indian-American's nomination as Director for Office of Management and Budget has run into trouble over her 'insulting' comments on Trump | P12

Govt allows panchayats to divert state, Central scheme funds to pay staff salaries

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

THE cash-strapped State Government is now permitting Gram Panchayats to utilise grants sanctioned under various State and Central government schemes, including MNREGA, to pay salaries of the panchayat staff. In Karnataka, there are around 53,000 employees working in over 6,000 Gram Panchayat, including revenue collectors, data entry operators and pourakarmikas. The panchayats are staring at a shortage of about ₹400 crore.

According to RDPR officials, the department needs Rs 911 crore towards salaries of the panchayat staff every year. This year, the State Government has released only ₹500 crore. Recently, a meeting of RDPR and Finance Department officials was convened by Minister K S Eshwarappa to discuss the issue.

CONTINUED ON: P7

EXPRESS READ

MLC Vishwanath to move SC over HC ruling

Bengaluru: Reacting to the Karnataka Hight Court's order which ruled that he cannot be appointed as minister, BJP MLC A H Vishwanath on Tuesday said that while he respected the ruling, he would move Supreme Court challenging it. P4

Medical colleges open in K'taka

Bengaluru: As Medical Colleges opened across the state on Tuesday, the institutes recorded 60 per cent attendance. The V-C of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences said colleges were asked to focus on revision classes on the first day. P7

NEW PARKING POLICY

Car buyers may have to give letter on parking space

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN an attempt to address the issue of congestion on Bengaluru roads owing to vehicular traffic and parking issues, the State Government is planning to come up with a new parking policy. Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Tuesday held a meeting with officials of Transport and Urban Development departments, the BDA and the BBMP on Bengaluru parking policy 2.0.

Chief Secretary T M Vijay Bhaskar has been asked to review the existing parking policy and draft a new one.

The Transport Department has suggested mandatory undertaking by future vehicle buyers assuring that they will park their vehicles only in designated parking spaces or inside their residential premises. The policy will also identify more places to set up smart parking ticket machines, identify paid parking spots, prohibition of irregular parking with heavy fines and conversion of empty plots into parking spots, specially in areas that see heavy footfall.



The new policy will mandate car buyers to park vehicles in designated spaces.

BDA chairman S R Vishwanath said that a few tough measures will have to be taken to address the issue. "Traffic is a huge problem in Bengaluru. Vehicle purchase is almost double that of other metro cities like Kolkata, Delhi or Chennai, but there are no systematic parking facilities for this. We have to stop people from parking on the roadside, double parking on busy roads, parking vehicles outside their houses." P2

Covid-19 positive widow buried as 'unidentified body'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mysuru

A 60-year-old Covid-19 patient from Periyapatna taluk in Mysuru district, who was brought to Mysuru in a government ambulance, was not provided treatment at a designated Covid-19 hospital. More shockingly, she was later buried as an 'unidentified body' without the family even being informed, according to family.

Ratna (name changed), a widow from Nandipura village, tested positive on September 18 in Periyapatna and was taken from there to a hospital in Mysuru city in a government ambulance, according to her brother Bhaskarachar. There was no information about her for the next two weeks. After running from one police station to another, when the family finally approached the Metagalli police station in Mysuru by October 30, they found out that she has already been buried as an 'unidentified body' as she was found dead on the road near the Covid hospital around 12 am on September 19, with no identity papers on her, said Bhaskarachar.

However, what remain unexplained is how the woman was found dead outside the hospital. It may be recalled that Mysuru was at its peak in terms of Covid-19 cases in September and many had complained about lack of beds in hospitals. The brother has blamed the local authorities and the ambulance driver for their plight.

Bhaskarachar told reporters here on Tuesday that the family was under the impression that Ratna was under treatment, but when there was no news about her, they inquired with the Mysuru hospital, where the authorities, to the family's shock, responded saying that they had not admitted anyone by that name. P3